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ALLEN-SCOTT REPORT

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Perry Leaders in Congress Warn President
Foreign Aid Program Faces Hard Battle

WASHINGTON—President Johnson is getting more doleful news on his already trouble-plagued \$3.4 billion foreign aid program.

Democratic congressional leaders are warning the President that the House and Senate are certain to lock horns in a damaging stalemate if Sen. J. William Fulbright, D-Ark., chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, persists with his strategem to split the aid measure into eight separate bills.

The leaders want the President to bluntly tell his old Senate friend Fulbright to shelve his "legislative gimmick," as they caustically refer to it, or foreign aid may be in even hotter water than it already is—which is plenty!

Ominously illustrative of the powerful opposition which Fulbright's "gimmicks" faces in the House are the following instances being cited to the President:

Rep. Thomas Morgan, D-Pa., chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, is dead set against Fulbright's scheme and says his committee has no intention of considering it. Morgan is backed on this stand by an overwhelming majority of Democrats and Republicans on his committee.

Equally strongly opposed is Rep. Otto Passman, D-La., chairman of the appropriations subcommittee in charge of the foreign aid budget. Long a militant critic of large-scale foreign aid spending, Passman's hostility to Fulbright's plan is heartily supported by Rep. Clarence Cannon, D-Mo., veteran chairman of the full Appropriations Committee.

Against this high-powered array of vehement dissent, Fulbright's eight-bill "gimmick" hasn't a ghost of a chance in the House.

Even in the Arkansas's own committee it's stirring up stormy discord.

Every attempt Fulbright has made to maneuver his bills through the committee (by means of proxy votes) has been thwarted by Sen. Wayne Morse, D-Ore., aggressive leader of the drive to drastically slash the multi-billion dollar foreign aid budget.

Greatly aiding Morse in this backstage fight is the prolonged Senate debate over the civil rights bill which severely limits committee meetings. No committee sessions can be held while the Senate is sitting, and as it convenes early and continues late into the night, committee proceedings are cut to a bare minimum.

In spearheading the inner committee challenge of Fulbright's "legislative gimmick," Morse finds himself in unexpected company. Lined up with him are committeemen who are supporting the President's \$3.4 billion aid budget. They are as strongly against cutting it as the scrappy Oregonian is for doing that. Yet both sides basically have the same reason for opposing Fulbright—they consider his plan a serious menace to their cause.

As the President's backers see it, Fulbright's eight separate bills would open the way for the opposition to rip the aid program to bits piecemeal. Morse makes the same argument—in reverse. He contends an across-the-board slash of an omnibus bill would be simpler and fairer than undertaking to whittle down the budget piecemeal.

To Morse, Fulbright's separate bills are a "trick" to circumvent a steep foreign aid cut, while the President's supporters are convinced the piecemeal "gimmick" would facilitate heavy ax wielding.

PRESIDENT'S DILEMMA

So far, the President has warily skirted this thorny hassle. He hasn't said no and he hasn't said yes.

As chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee—which among other functions passes on all treaties—Fulbright is in a strategic position to be helpful or hostile in this all-important field. Both the White House and the State Department speak softly and tread gently in dealing with him.

Also, he is an old congressional friend of the President and as such can't be pushed around. Strongly as his position may be disliked, the utmost circumspection has to be exercised in relations with him.

This touchy dilemma was graphically demonstrated by Foreign Aid Administrator David Bell at a meeting of the Foreign Relations Committee.

Senator Morse, who has no inhibitions about Fulbright, tried to get a categorical answer from Bell on the administration's policy on the eight-bill scheme. Morse got nowhere, as follows:

"What is your position on the handling of the foreign aid budget section by section in separate bills?" asked Morse. "Or do you think this should be done in an omnibus bill?"

"We regard this essentially as a matter for Congress to decide," ducked Bell. "We are interested in the contents of the legislation, the amount authorized, for what purpose, and other provisions. Whether that is enacted in one bill or several is not a matter on which we regard ourselves as having any particular reason to make a recommendation one way or the other."

ADVICE CONFLICTS

"The President had conflicting advice from members of the House and Senate, and the President recommended an omnibus program. I see no reason why any of us should make a recommendation one way or the other on that."

"You are not concerned then," snapped Morse, "about the fact that over on the House side there is very strong opposition to this procedural approach, and that you may very well end up with a considerable conflict between the House and Senate if we can't get together on a common method of handling the bill?"

"We regard the passage of the legislation as essentially a matter for Congress," Bell persisted. "We would obviously be deeply concerned if there were a long delay resulting from any cause."

"I share that concern," declared Morse. "But I want to suggest that you are headed for another unnecessary stalemate because of the different approach procedurally that is being followed by the two chambers."

But with Fulbright listening intently to this exchange, Bell firmly declined to express an opinion. Clearly he was not risking incurring Fulbright's ire.